VERA DICKSON'S TRIUMPH

SARA C. PALMER

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VERA DICKSON'S TRIUMPH

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BY

SARA C. PALMER
Author of "The Story of My Life," etc.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to commend the story written by Miss Sara C. Palmer, and in thus commending it I hope that it may have a very generous reception on the part of the reading public.

Miss Palmer has been preëminently successful in her chosen lifework. She is so true to God's Word and to the Son of God, that whatever she writes is worthy of careful reading.

This book must be interesting and helpful, because it has grown out of her work as an evangelist, and the things about which she writes are the things which she has experienced in her own life, and seen in the lives of others.

I pray for God's best blessing to be upon all that she is seeking to do for her Master in "Vera Dickson's Triumph."

J. Wilbur Chapman.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

In evangelistic work it has been my experience, that, after a sermon which the Lord used in bringing blessing to many, requests have come to have those discourses published; or, after a lecture on some special subject, similar requests were made. Then again, I have been asked to put in print some of the illustrations out of my experience, which have been wonderfully blessed because they are "true stories." For years I have thought of complying with the request of my friends and more than once have decided to take up special subjects and write them in fictional form, but, fearing I might be misunderstood or unduly criticized, I refrained from doing so. Doubts, too, as to the advisability of using the fictional as a vehicle to convey the truth along many lines, kept me from giving people the benefit of my experience through my pen.

The germ for this volume has been in my mind for years and took shape when I read the novels written by Sydney Watson, who is one of England's best known writers; all doubts were banished from my mind when I found the Lord had used them so wondrously in leading many into the truths contained in the stories.

I use the fictional style, therefore, to clothe the truth in this little book. Every story told and every illustration used really happened directly or indirectly in connection with my work, except the story of the tramp, and I am grateful to Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman, D. D., for giving me permission to use it.

My prayer is, that this story may be used in leading many, whom I could not reach with my platform messages, to see the error of their way and turn to the Lord. If one soul, precious in the sight of God, is blessed I will feel repaid.

SARA C. PALMER.

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Vera Dickson's Triumph

CHAPTER I

The Reception at "The Elms"

VERA DICKSON had just graduated at one of the best colleges in the land. Her father and mother were present at the commencement exercises and felt very proud of their only daughter, who could not in any sense be termed "a spoiled child." She was a girl of medium height, with deep blue eyes, and a mass of golden-brown hair, and features that were almost perfect. Although amiable, vivacious, kind and thoughtful to all around, Vera was free from conceit either of her personal charms or her wealth, though she could boast of affluence had she so desired.

Her mother had remained long enough after commencement to accompany her daughter to the city and to select goods and styles for the replenishment of Vera's wardrobe. Then she

had hastened home to make preparations for an appropriate welcome, while, for a fortnight, Vera was measured, fitted and draped until she never wanted to see a dressmaker again.

At last the work was done to the satisfaction of the girl, whom her mother thought eligible to become one of the society leaders of the future. Vera was really on her way home on board an express train and, as she listened to the sound of the wheels, while the train sped over the rails, she was glad that every revolution was bringing her nearer her destination.

With a cordial welcome Mr. and Mrs. Dickson kissed their daughter affectionately as they received her into their home once more. They had planned very carefully for her education, and Vera had not disappointed them. She now stood in the spacious hall of her palatial home with refinement, culture and grace marking everything she did, to the great delight of the indulgent parents, who had looked forward to this moment with great expectancy through the years.

Her father, Lewis W. Dickson, was the sole proprietor of the largest and finest department

"The Elms," the Dickson Residence

store in the city. The business was growing by leaps and bounds, promising great wealth to its owner, if the saying were true that "coming events cast their shadows before."

He was a keen business man, a liberal philanthropist, a clean politician, a favorite in society and a diplomat in the church. He was envied by business men, as he held the respect of all who knew him because of his sterling qualities. His word was as good as his bond. He was admired by the masses, who never knew him to turn a deaf ear to a tale of woe, or refuse a helping hand to the needy. Business was never too pressing for Mr. Dickson to be gracious to the most menial stranger who came on a legitimate errand, or to offer advice to the dullest clerk, or a word of encouragement to the struggling youth. He took his employes on their merit, and paid better salaries than any other employer in the city. When asked why he did so, he answered, "I do not want to become a despised millionaire who makes his money by the sweat-system and hoards it for its own sake. I want the entire working force to enjoy it with me."

It was natural for Vera's young friends to decide she had been born with a silver spoon in her mouth, while the more venerable said, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:6).

"Come right up to your room, Vera," said her mother, as she led the way up the wide staircase, "you will require a good rest as we are having a grand reception tonight in your honor, and the most delightful people of the city are to be present to welcome you."

Care-free Vera, who was always bright and happy, was soon fast asleep. When she awoke she found preparations for the reception in full swing, so the only work assigned to her was to look after her girl friends, Madge Wendall and Louise Roper, who were to receive with her.

The girls arrived early and were busy discussing their beautiful bouquets when Mrs. Dickson announced that the guests were beginning to arrive, and she directed them to take their places beside her in the drawing room.

Vera looked and acted like a very queen among women, as she greeted the guests of the

evening, and introduced one after another to her fair companions, and not until they had partaken of some refreshment, did she accept Alick Gordon's arm to go to the dining room.

Alick Gordon, like Vera, had not long returned from college, and had started his practice of law with one of the best firms in the city. They had been school friends for some years, and had kept up a correspondence through their college days. With happy expectations Alick welcomed his erstwhile companion back to her home.

"What do you intend doing with yourself now that you are home, Vera?"

"Oh! make the best of what pleasure there is in this quiet city," answered the girl, in a most unassuming manner. "I will play tennis, golf and hockey when I can,—go fishing and riding occasionally,—then I will have cards, dances and plays when I want indoor sport; I can think of a hundred and one ways of entertaining and being entertained. What were you thinking of, Alick?"

"Just this, that you can always count on me and any help I can give you, no matter how

busy I am," answered Alick, in his big-hearted and generous way.

"Capital, Alick! I thought I could depend on your assistance in our plans, and I assure you, I will keep you busy," she said laughingly; "you will never be among the unemployed so long as I am around," and they were soon lost in an animated talk over some reminiscences of the past.

CHAPTER II

The New Minister

MRS. DICKSON was a woman of the world, much loved and much sought after, and the company assembled at "The Elms" that night was made up of the élite of society. They praised Mrs. Dickson for her wisdom in ushering her daughter into society in this way, and commented on Vera's love for entertaining which she inherited from her mother.

Vera played and sang in such a charming manner that everyone present felt like staying in the background and allowing her to carry the programme through herself. One man, who sat with tears streaming down his cheeks while she sang a simple little song, said, "She has the most bewitching voice I ever heard!" So the time went and all felt sorry when one after another took their departure, though each one went home feeling that some fine entertainments were in store for them in the months that

were to follow, while Vera was just herself, happy, full of life and spirits, and desirous that others should be happy also.

Her mother followed her into her room that night and looked for some words of appreciation from her daughter and she was not disappointed, for no sooner did Vera see her enter than she threw her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her again and again, saying, "You are the kindest, dearest mother I ever heard of, and it is so nice to be here that I wish my school days had been over long ago, so that I could have enjoyed all these good things before this."

"Well, dear, I am glad you are enjoying them now, but this is only a foretaste of what is to come. Now you must go to sleep and we will talk about these things tomorrow."

It was time for lunch before anyone made an appearance next day; after a light repast Mrs. Dickson and her daughter entered into a conversation of such absorbing interest to both, that neither of them realized how many hours had passed while they were planning a regular programme and mapping out a round of

entertainments of various kinds, that would keep both women busy for many months to come.

"There is just one thing, Vera, that I want to mention while we are making our plans," said Mrs. Dickson,—"you know your father and I are staunch members of the church, but we have a new minister, Dr. Archibald Douglass, who is the most fanatical person I ever heard, and we are very unsettled at present about our church home. We may take our letters to another church, but, in the meantime, we are undecided, as our church has all the best families whom we know and there are few people of any consequence in the churches near us, so probably we have to remain and make the best of a bad bargain; those who voted for this man are the plebean of our congregation who are usually the trouble-makers in any denomination."

"But mother, he is an educated man and I cannot understand why he caters to that class of people," said Vera, in a puzzled manner.

"Yes, he is educated, there is no question about that, but his doctrines are troubling the

educated people in the congregation,—he has such peculiar views."

"What does he teach?"

"He is most imperious about amusements in the church, and you know, Vera, we have held our young people because we believe in entertaining them."

"I cannot see why he should deprecate amusements since the burden of them is not left on his shoulders," said Vera, knowing the amount of time and expense her mother had prided herself in putting into the entertainments at their church.

"That is just what we have told him, but he insists that his programme consists of preaching the old-fashioned gospel without compromise and that he will never entertain people on the road to destruction, even if he should lose every member of the church."

"What is the gospel then, if he leaves amusements out of the question?"

"That is what I cannot understand. He believes, he says, in 'Ruin by the Fall, Redemption by the Blood and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost' and although an educated man he

holds that education has nothing to do with salvation. He also says that in our unsaved state we are 'amiable children of wrath, educated heirs of hell, accomplished servants of the devil.' That education is a great boon and blessing to humanity he admits, but the power of God alone can change the heart. He emphasizes the fact that educated and uneducated alike must experience the saving change, and accept by faith the Son of God as their personal Saviour."

"I fear I could not believe such theology, mother," said Vera, her fertile brain recalling the teaching of her college days. "A man who is considered one of the very best theologians in the country visited our school not long ago and lectured on theology, and he said, 'Justification by faith is an antiquated theory; it was good enough for an ignorant, illiterate man like Abraham, but we could not expect educated, refined, cultured people of the twentieth century to believe that; what we need today,' said this worthy theologian, 'is education, culture, refinement, occupation, and that is what the world is coming to!' So, mother-mine, I prefer to

believe my theological professor's views, who thinks the church is the custodian of our morals, and if that be the case, I will seek the highest standard possible for myself and my set of friends, and also the help of the church to live up to that standard."

"Those are just my sentiments, Vera, and we have our hands full as we seek to make changes in our church as well as entertaining our friends in the future."

CHAPTER III

The "Elmhurst" Family

THE Gordon property adjoined the Dickson estate and the two families were on very friendly terms, though Mrs. Gordon was a very different woman from Mrs. Dickson. Mrs. Gordon was a very quiet, retiring character who was seeking to please God in every detail of her life. Those who wanted her portrait could open their Bibles at the book of Proverbs and in the thirty-first chapter was the type of woman to be found at "Elmhurst."

Her husband, Judge Gordon, was an exemplary Christian man, a clear-cut character who stood for righteousness and had no compromise in his make-up. Business men trusted him; politicians knew they could not buy him; transgressors of the country's laws knew justice would be meted out to them irrespective of influence or social standing.

They had lived a comparatively quiet life until recently when their son Alick had re-

turned from college and demanded that their house should be open to his particular set of friends, some of whom neither the Judge nor Mrs. Gordon approved.

A distant relative whose parents had died, leaving her alone in the world, had come to live with them. Jessie Arnold, like her friend Mrs. Gordon, was a Christian, who not only professed to be a follower of Christ, but was an ardent worker for her Master.

Each morning after breakfast the two ladies met in the library to read a portion of Scripture and unite in prayer to the One whose ear was ever open to their cry. The duties of the day seemed as nothing after this time of sweet communion and both took up their respective duties realizing the truth of the words, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30).

During the reading one lovely morning, Mrs. Gordon looked rather sorrowful, and before prayer she confided her sorrow to Miss Arnold.

"Jessie, I am very much concerned about Alick; I fear he is drifting, and my greatest

"Elmhurst," the Home of the Gordons

fear is, that he is becoming fond of alcohol; have you thought of this?"

Thus interrogated, Miss Arnold, always open and frank, confirmed Mrs. Gordon's fears.

"He is going out tonight with his friends," said the anxious mother, "and I want you to pray for him. Pledge-signing is no use to Alick; what he needs is a change of heart, and he will never be a success in the professional world until he has experienced the saving power of God in his life; let us make him a special subject of prayer."

That evening the two ladies were together once more; the Judge, who was tired after a hard day in court and who had another strenuous day ahead, had retired early. Mrs. Gordon watched the clock anxiously; soon she heard a step on the driveway and, rising hurriedly, said, "There is Alick; I shall go upstairs and I wish you would remain and talk to him about his soul's salvation."

With a prayer for wisdom Miss Arnold complied with her friend's request and waited; the door opened and Alick walked in.

"Hullo, Jessie; I am surprised to find you here."

"I waited for you."

"That was unnecessary."

"Yes, except that I wanted to talk to you."

"Going to preach a sermon, are you?"

"Not exactly, Alick, but I am anxious to know when you are going to surrender to the claims of Christ."

"Oh, bother! I never think about such things."

"You ought to, Alick; you are grieving the Spirit of God, who has been following you in convicting power through the years."

"Now look here, Jessie, I know that mother left you to preach to me; I suppose she thinks you can convert me, but I want you to know you are wasting your breath; I never could be a Christian."

"Why not, Alick? You must know that you are breaking your mother's heart."

"That may be, Jessie, but I cannot be a Christian."

"Do you think that the Christ who has saved and satisfied your father and mother cannot do the same for you?"

"To tell the truth, Jessie,—I have tried, but all in vain. I never told anyone before, but I am tired of the life I am living, and I wish again and again I could live differently, but it is impossible."

"Yes, in your own strength, but not if you take Christ as your Saviour and have the power of God in your life."

"You may be surprised to know that I have even gone down on my knees at my bedside and have done just what you say I ought to do, and thought I was saved, for I know God's way of salvation, but the next day I could not pass the saloon no matter how I tried; can you explain that?"

"Yes, according to the Bible you were 'led captive by the devil at his will' and you had to go just where he led you, which goes to prove you need to change masters. Why not take Jesus Christ for your master and by God's grace serve Him, and bring the peace and comfort to this grand old home that nothing else can bring?"

An awful struggle ensued, but once more God's Holy Spirit was driven away grieved, and Satan got the victory.

CHAPTER IV

An Important Matter

IT was Sunday morning and the first Lord's Day Vera had been at home for several years, as her vacations had been spent with her father and mother, travelling or at their summer home, so that she was a comparative stranger at "The Elms."

"Church is at 11 o'clock, dear, and William will take us in the car."

"All right, mother," and Vera hurried off to dress for church as she had done many times before when a much smaller girl than she was in the day in question.

The ride to church was uneventful but pleasant. All nature seemed to recognize this day of rest and gladness. The air was laden with the perfume of flowers, the sun shone in all his splendor, the birds sang their sweetest songs.

To be sure the pews were no longer rented, but there was a particular one that was always occupied by the Dicksons and it seemed as

though no one else dare enter that pew, nor sit in that particular place to worship, so to this pew Mr. Dickson led the way.

Vera was full of curiosity; she had heard so much about this strange preacher who had some way or other been called to preach in their church, that she expected to see some kind of monstrosity in the place of their former pastor who would not have offended Mrs. Dickson for worlds. Instead, she saw a young man, tall, well-built and fine-looking, with a mass of black hair, and blue eyes that seemed to see right into the souls of his hearers. His square chin indicated great determination and his firmly-set jaw looked as though he defied men or devils when God revealed to him some truth from His word.

"His preaching is better in the mornings," whispered Mrs. Dickson, "I have almost decided to stop coming at night, as he makes one feel so uncomfortable."

Vera enjoyed the preliminary part of the service, as she was fond of music, and that church was famed for having the best talent that money could procure. Then came the ser-

mon, when the minister took for his theme, "Service," basing his remarks on the words "Go work today in my vineyard" (Matt. 21:28).

He showed the need of working "today," for the night cometh when no man can work, and urged all the real children of God to get into harness for their Master, and obey His command. The speaker was eloquent; his audience hung on his words, and the power that accompanied them seemed to grip his hearers, sending them forth to be, no longer idlers, but "laborers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9).

Vera listened very attentively, but for some reason a great deal of what was said was incomprehensible to her. Being enamored, however, with the preaching, she determined to take a class in Sunday-school and so do something to obey the command that had been so clearly heralded forth that morning.

The service was not mentioned until the Dickson family was seated at the lunch table, when Vera announced her intention and inquired how she should go about the work. Her mother, who was not only a leader in society,

but, who, since she came as a bride to "The Elms," had been a leader in the church also, had no difficulty in directing her to the right person, feeling rather proud of her daughter for following her mother's example in combining pleasure in the world with service in the church.

Vera, according to her mother's suggestion, went to see the officials of the church. She made her request and the following Sunday was installed in a class of ten fine boys, ranging from fifteen to nineteen years of age.

The boys were delighted, and all the more so when they found their young teacher so charmingly natural and unassuming, and so apparently free from fanaticism. They immediately decided they were going to have a good time in their class in the coming days, and they were not disappointed, for their teacher had her mother's ability to entertain, and no class in all that large school was so fortunate—so the boys thought—as class No. 3. Never a week passed but Vera had some new entertainment planned for her boys, and she herself joined them in all their pleasures. With the help of Alick Gor-

don and some of her friends in the city, her programmes were considered by entertainers a very unusual and extraordinary type.

* * * * * * *

Two long rings had failed to bring anyone to the telephone at the Dickson residence, and Vera, who was disturbed in her reading, went herself, and sitting down on the chair at her mother's desk, raised the receiver.

"Hullo."

"Vera?"

"Yes, Alick."

"I'm coming over to see you."

"All right."

"I have a very important matter to ask you about and must get it off my mind."

"Come right over then."

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye," and she hung up the receiver.

That was nothing unusual since there was a perfect understanding between the young people that some day they would be united in holy matrimony, and the parents in both homes were well satisfied with the arrangement.

Vera was just wondering what the important matter was when Alick walked in unannounced and greeted her. They laughed gaily and chatted for a time and then remembering the "important matter," she said, "Now, young man, what is it that gives you trouble?"

"It is a matter that is not pleasant to handle."

"For you or for me?" said Vera in a bantering way.

"For both," replied Alick, with so much earnestness that Vera thought there was trouble brewing somewhere.

"Proceed."

"What is your idea about card-playing, Vera?"

"Why do you ask that question?" asked Vera, surprised at the introduction to the unpleasant discussion.

"Well, it is just like this, Vera,—our people are strong against cards and I was more than surprised that you used them here as part of the entertainment for your Sunday-school class."

She had turned very pale, but as her lips took a resolute curve she faced the issue and

answered decisively, "I see no harm in playing cards at any time; my boys enjoy it and I see no reason why I should not give them all the pleasure possible so as to hold them for the Sunday-school and also for the church."

"Supposing they should become gamblers, which is an argument used today against cards."

"That could never be," she said with great excitement. "My boys are splendid; none of them have a desire to go farther than I tell them in regard to cards; besides I have no faith in men who cannot play a game of cards occasionally without becoming gamblers."

"Supposing you were engaged to one of those boys and he actually became a gambler, would you marry him?"

"Certainly not! I would have nothing to do with a man who could not be as temperate in this as in everything else."

Alick hung his head and was lost in thought for a few minutes, while Vera watched him closely.

"That is all I wanted to know, Vera. Our folks have such strong convictions about these

things that I was anxious to know your mind, and determined to find out before it would trouble me further."

"Were you really troubled, Alick?"

"Yes, I was, but since I know your opinion I feel wonderfully relieved as I have such confidence in you and value your judgment in this as in many other things. You are such an admirable character, Vera; so anxious to help others; doing everything in your power for humanity and yet not a bit narrow-minded. You know, Vera, my mother is one of the best women in the world, but she is so narrow along these lines that a fellow has no liberty in entering into modern amusements whatever."

CHAPTER V

The Itinerant Preacher

"I WONDER why we should be bored with special services in our church," said Mrs. Dickson, when she was seated at the lunch table one Sunday after the morning service.

Dr. Archibald Douglass, a fearless evangelistic preacher who dared to do things for God in the face of opposition from the unspiritual members of his congregation, had announced that morning that a friend of his, who had returned from an evangelistic tour of the world, was to spend a week or two with him, and the officials had consented to let him preach in a short series of meetings. This was what drew forth the criticism of Mrs. Dickson, who continuing, said, "I feel it is an imposition to heap up expenses when we are paying a large salary already to our pastor and expect him to do the work. We do not need an evangelist in our church; let him go to the rescue missions and talk to the ribald habitués there; to bring

him to our church to convert us is an insult to the staunch members of our congregation who built the church and have supported it so loyally and nobly through the years. I have no sympathy with such a move; I fear we have the wrong man for our pastor this time, and anything I can do to have him removed you may rest assured I will do it, and will not fail to greet his departure with acclamation."

Vera, who never was regarded as capricious, was very thoughtful and her mother turned to her with the query, "Are you going tonight?"

"Yes, mother, I shall go; you see my opinions are not fixed like yours. My knowledge of church work is very fragmentary and I prefer to hear for myself in order to be better able to discuss the matter intelligently."

Mrs. Dickson demurred somewhat at first, but reassured by her daughter's reference to her intelligence, she said, "You have always been a very sensible, level-headed girl whom no fanatical preaching could lead astray, therefore it will be perfectly safe for you to attend and study the thing through, and I venture to say you will agree with me as to the type of

people this kind of preaching is intended for."

So Vera went that night, and the message seemed so straight from the Word of God that it went right home to her susceptible heart. There was no sign of fanaticism about the preacher but an earnestness that made Vera feel he knew what he was talking about.

The text was Genesis 3:9, "Where art thou?" and the preacher put the question to Christians, backsliders, and sinners. His points were well illustrated and applied to his hearers; he did not talk to people who were not there, but right to the heart of each person present, reminding Vera of Daniel Webster, who said, "When I listen to a speaker I like to feel that he is making it to me a personal matter."

She went home impressed and very thoughtful and as she knelt at her bedside that night she could hear again and again the clear, rich, bell-like voice of the preacher, asking the question, "Where art thou?"

She attended very regularly for several nights, becoming more and more impressed. It seemed as though the preacher knew her thoughts and that some one must have told

him her life story; more than once she felt inclined to ask him why he singled her out in all that vast audience and preached to her alone.

It was all new to Vera and she wished the application could be expunged from his sermons, as that troubled her more than his arguments and caused her to toss about on her pillow for hours at a time, resulting in a decision more than once, never to return to the meetings, only to find herself there the next night as one of his most interested listeners.

One night he made special reference to card-playing and urged the people to drop the use of cards and "Yield themselves unto God," saying, with facile ease and certainty, as he referred them to the Word of God, that when they belonged to the Lord they would not need to go down to Egypt for help (Isa. 31:1), not even to amuse their friends nor entertain their visitors; they would, rather, employ their precious time in the service of Jesus Christ, and go out seeking to bring others from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Vera, who was an adept card player, knowing that her mother had all arrangements made for a great whist party the following week, and that many of the people present were invited, thought this was a reflection upon her mother, so, Naaman-like, she went away in a rage and did not study the movement to its finale as she had previously intended to do.

CHAPTER VI

Hurt Feelings

MRS. DICKSON, who looked askance at all evangelistic work, had very quietly planned a trip to a distant city to visit friends, but especially to get away from the meetings. She was too much of a lady to openly protest, so she decided that to ignore the effort would hurt the minister more than to argue the point about the advisability of having such services.

Vera, therefore, was practically alone, and feeling she wanted to unburden her heart to someone, she made her way through the grounds to a little gate that led into the Gordon demesne and soon she was looking into a summer house where she thought she would find Miss Arnold; she had discovered that that fine Christian woman betook herself daily to a quiet spot where she could spend some time undisturbed with the most congenial society she knew, namely, her Lord and His Word.

The summer house looked like a miniature library and Miss Arnold was seated at the table enjoying herself as she pored over her open Bible.

"Good morning, Miss Arnold," said Vera, as she bounded in.

"Good morning, Miss Vera, you gave me quite a start; I did not realize my hiding-place had been discovered and I did not even hear you coming."

"Too much engrossed in your reading, perhaps."

"I was enjoying my portion very much," said Miss Arnold, as she laid her hand caressingly on the open Bible.

"I thought so; you seemed oblivious to everything else," said Vera.

"You look as though something is troubling you this morning. May I ask what it is?"

"You guessed aright; there is something troubling me and that is why I came here for a little 'confabulation' with you."

"Nothing wrong at home, I hope, Miss Vera."

"Oh no!" she said laughingly, "I have no home troubles. You may think it strange but I am troubled about the meetings."

"I thought you were enjoying them; you seemed so much interested."

"That is so; I was very much interested until last night."

"And what happened then?"

"The preacher came out so strongly against card-playing."

"Was he wrong in so doing?"

"Perhaps not; but everyone does not agree with him on that question."

"You would not expect him to compromise even though he knew that, would you?"

"He could at least have left the question open," said Vera, warming up to her subject. "I do not see what that has to do with the gospel anyway."

"Would not that in itself be compromising?"

"I knew you would not agree with me, but I want you to know that I am completely disgusted with the whole thing, and I have made up my mind never to go back while he is in this city."

"But, dear, he did not say anything that is not true."

"That may be," said Vera, "but our minister knows that part of the entertainment at our house is cards, that I bring my Sunday-school boys there occasionally for a game of cards, and our people are among the best contributors to the church funds, and to bring a stranger here to criticise us to our faces is going too far. I feel justified in the stand I take. It is just as mother said, 'These special meetings are all right for rescue missions, but not for a church like ours.' "

"You are not going to leave the church over it, are you?" said Miss Arnold, fearing the family would drift from the gospel that was being given in all its simplicity.

"No," said Vera thoughtfully. "I shall keep my class and continue my church work just the same as before, but will be conspicuous by my absence at special services in future."

Tears were in Miss Arnold's eyes and Vera thought she had said too much, so when she had finished her little speech she arose to go, and, slipping her arm around Miss Arnold's shoul-

ders, she kissed her affectionately and said, "There! I did not mean to trouble you with all my worries, and I shall leave you before I do any more harm."

Miss Arnold smiled through her tears and could only answer, "I will pray for you, Miss Vera; the Lord has something greater for you to do." But not realizing the meaning of that sentence, Vera went off feeling better since she had confided her troubles to someone else.

CHAPTER VII

The Card Party

MRS. DICKSON was very much interested in what happened during her absence. She was not long home until she discovered Vera's decision about the cards and her joy knew no bounds when she learned that once more she and her daughter saw eye to eye with each other.

"You were perfectly right, my dear," she said, as she patted Vera on the arm. "I am more than proud of a daughter who cannot be led astray by such fanatics as are brought to our church these days."

Then as the days went by and the loquacious ladies told of the happenings in the church during the visit of this strange evangelist, Mrs. Dickson's placid anger gave way to a more furious kind and she scolded, talked, planned, and even threatened until she almost made Vera sorry she had taken the step she did.

"The idea," said Mrs. Dickson to a caller one day, as the conversation turned quickly to the only topic that seemed to tickle the ears of her set, "of our circle of friends being dubbed as gamblers because we give prizes at our clubs and card parties, and to think that our church which we helped to organize and for which we have worked so hard, should at this time in its history have a minister who would dare to bring a man to insult our members by talking about our innocent amusements, and do everything but call out our names. I wonder what religion is coming to? I presume the time will soon come when we will not be permitted by the church to do anything but eat, work and sleep. Presently the discipline will be so fixed that we will not be able to worship there unless we see eye to eye with every Tom, Dick, and Harry of an evangelist who happens to come our way. I do not believe in such tommy-rot. I believe in attending church and supporting it as an institution, but I also believe in personal liberty and feel perfectly free to do as I please outside the doors of the sanctuary."

"Now daughter," she said to Vera, who was just returning from a ride, "just to show your good sense I want you to come and help me select the prizes for our party. We will have the very best and many of them, just to get even with that sanctimonious Dr. Douglass who thought he did such a good thing in hitting us indirectly for our card-playing."

So it came to pass that never had there been such a party in the city and never such prizes offered as were carried away by the fortunate ladies who did not agree with the pastor of that aristocratic congregation.

But in the well-furnished pastor's study sat Dr. Douglass brooding over his many troubles, not the least of which was the opposition he had to face from the most prominent members of his church, and on bended knees he pleaded with God to awaken and save these same women who could be a power for God in leading others into the paths of righteousness, if they themselves were fully surrendered to the claims of Jesus Christ. As he again surrendered his own life, he asked for grace to be kept true and loyal to his convictions and to his God as one

of His appointed shepherds, who was laboring not to please men, but with a single eye to the glory of God.

That evening he was going to teach a company of young men and young women whom the Lord had helped to bring together in an organized Bible class and who had learned the power of a separated life. They loved their teacher as children love a father, for many of them had definitely surrendered to the claims of Christ under his ministry, while all of them had been led into the deeper truths of the Word of God and were now actively engaged in the work of soul-winning. When he reached the meeting-place he found them talking in groups, and there was a little more difficulty than usual in bringing the meeting to order. The grand old song written by Dr. A. J. Gordon was sung in a very prayerful spirit:

"Help me to be holy,
O Father of light;
Guilt-burdened and lowly,
I bow in Thy sight;
How shall a stained conscience,
Dare gaze on Thy face?
E'en though in Thy presence
Thou grant me a place.

"Help me to be holy,
O Saviour divine;
Why conquer so slowly
This nature of mine?
Stamp deeply Thy likeness
Where Satan's hath been;
Expel with Thy brightness
My darkness and sin!

"Help me to be holy,
O Spirit divine;
Come, sanctify wholly
This temple of Thine;
Now cast out each idol,
Here set up Thy throne,
Reign, reign without rival,
Supreme and alone!"

Then the president of the class said: "I feel led to ask Dr. Douglass to change the course of this meeting tonight. My heart is grieved when I think of the people belonging to this church who are 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' We, who have been attending these Bible classes have learned to know a little of 'the depths of the riches of His grace' as we have been privileged to study under the faithful teaching of our pastor and we can understand, in a little measure, the burden he is carrying as he seeks to lead us on for God in the

face of opposition from the influential, but unspiritual members of this church. I feel that we, too, have a responsibility in this matter, and must shoulder the burden, helping our pastor by our prayers, sympathy and hearty co-operation. While his heart is sad tonight—judging from our own feelings—I propose that we have a prayer meeting instead of our regular Bible study class, and that we ask God definitely to save the society leaders in this church and also in the community. All who are in favor of turning this meeting into an old-fashioned prayer meeting for the purpose of waiting upon God, raise your hand." Every hand went up and, turning to the pastor, he said: "Dr. Douglass, we turn the meeting over to you to conduct it as you are led by the Holy Spirit, but please remember that we are with you in the stand you take against sin, and we are determined to be loyal to Jesus at all costs."

Glad to know he could at least count on this company of young people to "pray through" until the devil was defeated, he dispensed with the lesson, and together they knelt to fight a battle with "principalities and powers in heav-

enly places" (Eph. 6: 12), that was going to give victory to the hosts of the Lord in the near future, for little did they realize how soon their prayers would be answered in God's way which is always far more "abundantly than we can ask or think."

CHAPTER VIII

Gambling

MRS. GORDON was becoming more and more worried about Alick. She had recently learned that one of his friends had lost all his money in gambling and had gone away from the city. Although Alick did not tell his mother so, she was convinced in talking the matter over with him, that only one of the young men had drifted to the gambling dens.

As the days went by, however, it became more and more apparent that Alick could not get enough money, and naturally he always came to his mother. It seemed as though he was spending his own income and that of his father as well, and then he was not satisfied. This condition of affairs alarmed Mrs. Gordon and when her husband told her something had gone wrong with his books, and money was missing that had been entrusted to him for investment, she concluded, with her womanly

intuition, that more than one young man had left the so-called innocent amusement in the homes of church members, to join the ranks of those who frequent the gambling dens of the world. Therefore she paid a secret visit to the office of her husband and together they went over the books to try to unravel the mystery. Yes, it was only too true, the money had been taken, and strange to say just the amount that they had learned the other young man had lost. This startling revelation confirmed what they had feared for some time, proving that their boy had been a partner in sin with his companion who had left the country several months ago.

Next morning Miss Arnold was preparing to come down for the morning worship, which, for a reason unknown to her, had been postponed until eleven o'clock. It was now ten forty-five and a knock at her door made her think she was wanted down stairs, when Mrs. Gordon appeared with a strained, anxious look in her face.

"Don't come down stairs until Alick leaves," said the sad-faced mother and walked out again without waiting for an answer.

Miss Arnold waited half an hour and then, hearing the door close and someone walk down the driveway, she decided Alick had gone, so she slipped down and quietly opened the library door and to her surprise there he stood, his elbow on the mantel-piece, his head on his hand, and tears falling on the rug at his feet. His mother stood beside him waiting, and the answer she was asking for came,—"Yes, mother, I did it."

Jessie Arnold closed the door as quietly as she had opened it, feeling that this was no place for intruders. She was not surprised when later Mrs. Gordon told her she had accused Alick of theft, and that he had confessed, so like his friend he, too, had gone away without saying goodbye to anyone, not even to Vera, for had she not told him she would never marry a man who was not strong enough to play cards without gambling?

Everything was hushed up and kept very quiet, but it reached the Dickson family never-

theless, and somehow Vera had a guilty conscience, as over and over again would rise before her a vision of Alick when he came to discuss that "important matter." Her own voice seemed to mock her as it echoed from the past telling him there was no harm in card-playing, and with what anguish of heart she now recalled,—what she thought at the time a compliment,—his remark that she was not so narrow minded as his mother.

It did not seem judicial to visit the Gordon home or mention Alick even to Miss Arnold since they seemed so reticent that no one could approach them on the subject, so poor disconsolate Vera carried the burden alone, and fearful were her conjectures as to the fate of Alick, while ever and anon she wished she could undo the past and bring him back exonerated.

CHAPTER IX

Deepening Interest

"A CITY-WIDE evangelistic campaign! What will we have next?" said Mrs. Dickson, when she learned that the leading men of the city had been called to meet the ministers to discuss the advisability of having a united effort to reach the entire city for Jesus Christ.

"I think it is a fine thing," said her husband, who had been appointed treasurer of the movement. "Single church efforts are no longer reaching the non-church going people, so that the only hope now is the large tabernacle meetings which break down denominational prejudice and bring together all classes of people in the hope that many may be won for God."

Disconcerted in her effort to frustrate the plans if possible, she said in her most sarcastic way, "You speak as though you might be the first to 'hit the trail.' "

"Well there is no knowing what may happen before this thing has come to an end," said

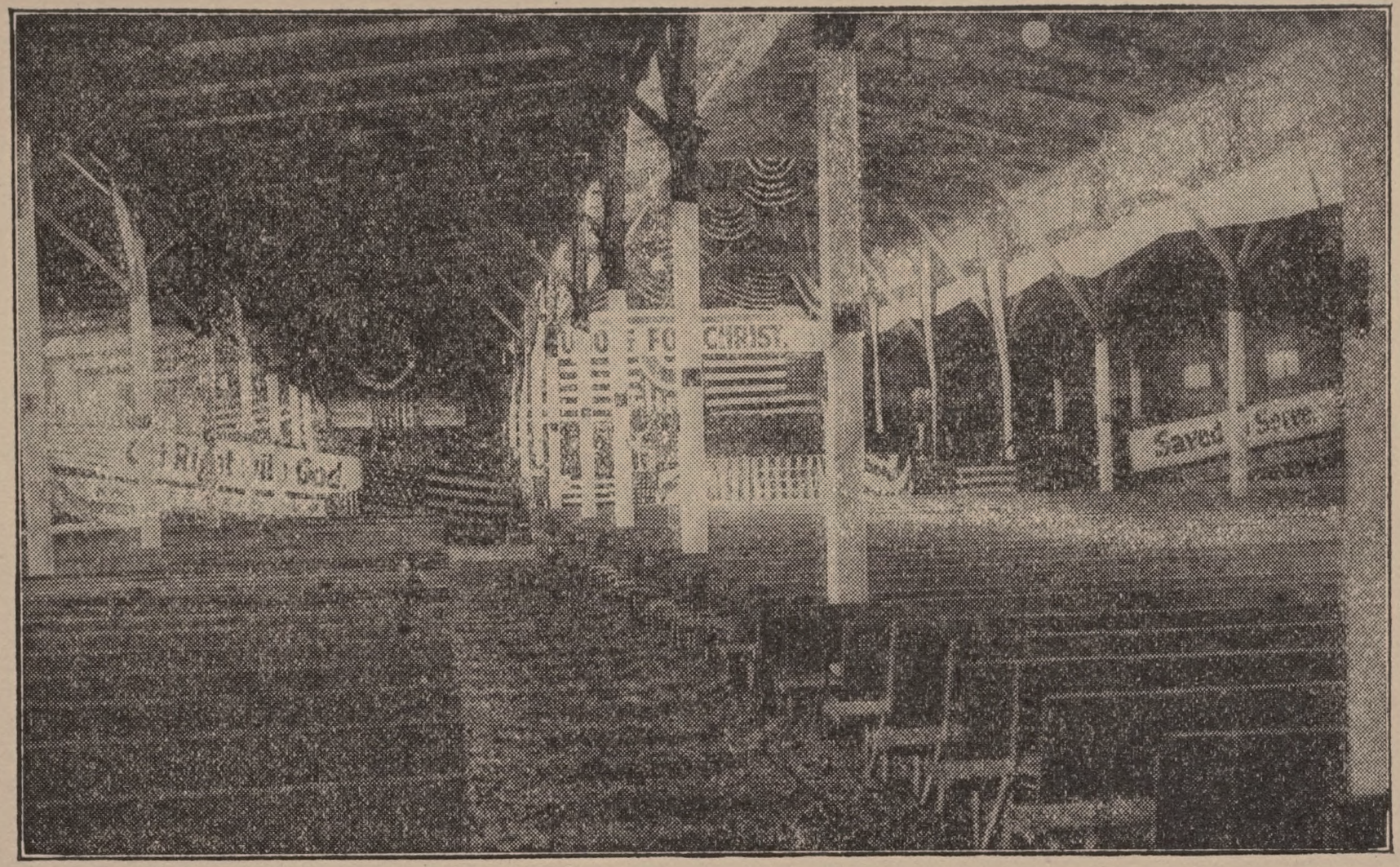
Mr. Dickson, as he smiled at his wife's disapproval of the whole thing.

So the weeks that followed were taken up with detail work in preparation for the forthcoming campaign. Committees were formed, preliminary work started, and the city began to hum with work and workers to make the campaign, so far as organization was concerned, the greatest event in the history of the city.

Vera was appointed chairman of the young women's department of the campaign, and she threw her whole heart and soul into the work, enlisting the sympathy and interest of high school, college, business, and society girls. She was also appointed by the music chairman as special mezzo-soprano soloist in the large chorus choir practicing for the meetings.

She enjoyed the work immensely and even her mother seemed pleased as she told day after day of her success in creating interest and arousing enthusiasm in the young womanhood of the city.

Like her mother she had an abundance of surplus energy and this work afforded ample



"I will never go forward in that tabernacle to make a confession of my faith in God"

opportunity to use it to great advantage for the betterment of humanity. She had made a special study of the social and civic conditions in the city and had helped in reform movements to reach the great mass of poverty-stricken, drink-besotted, sin-soaked human beings around her, and now this great sweeping movement to bring them, as she expected, into the church, appealed to her. Farther than that Vera never went, in things pertaining to God.

The time arrived for the opening of the campaign and all who had planned and worked so hard awaited the crucial moment with great expectancy.

Vera was in her place in the huge choir loft, and her father, as a prominent member of the executive committee, was seated behind the ministers, with Mrs. Dickson, inexorable as ever, by his side. Judge Gordon also sat near the ministers; he was chairman of the entertainment committee and had thrown his home open for the evangelistic party. Since there were only three in their family now, they found they could very comfortably use one wing of

the grand old home, while the rest of the house was vacated for the exclusive use of the evangelists.

Certainly they were criticized, but both the Judge and Mrs. Gordon had prayed about the matter, deciding that Philemon-like they could provide a home for these servants of God. Besides, they had learned from the Word of God that His true servants were "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13), so they were compelled and impelled by love for God to take care of His children.

The music, which was an exceptionally strong feature, specially interested Vera. The sermon, couched in the finest language, was a strong appeal to all the real Christians present. The text was "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

The most fastidious person present could not but be pleased as the evangelist, a master of his subject, carried them off into the starry realms and pointed out God's power in keep-

ing in their place, planets, constellations, and millions of stars, which are all subject to Him, and that that same God, speaking through His servant, was beseeching them, as poor worms of the dust, to "present their bodies," etc, that He might use them for His own glory. It was a heart-searching message, and God's Holy Spirit continued to speak to those who heard it long after that first service had closed.

Vera and her father felt rather glad that they had entered so heartily into everything, while the Gordons felt no sacrifice was too great for the Lord whom they were seeking to serve faithfully day by day, but Mrs. Dickson felt rather uneasy, as she was not naturally a self-sacrificing character and especially had she made few sacrifices for God.

In the evening the tabernacle was crowded again with a most auspicious gathering, and the message was accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, and all who were interested felt that the opening meetings promised great things for the coming days and weeks.

Vera had reasons for being in the work of this campaign. First, it would lift her mind

for the time being off the great trouble that had come into her life; second, she wanted to set a good example to others as she was a recognized leader in the city, and third, her musical talents could be used to great advantage in a special way. So for about six weeks, every minute of every day was filled and each day seemed to bring fresh revelations.

There had been interest at the beginning, but the interest had grown until people were talking of nothing else; no other movement had been comparable in magnitude to this. With superiority of numbers in faith and consecration the campaign against sin was launched with such a concentration of energy as the city had never seen. Telephones were going continually and the conversation was all—campaign. People by the scores and hundreds were meeting in groups for prayer daily; meetings were being held in shop and factory, and, everywhere, people were singing campaign songs. Men on the cars and trains were talking campaign, and the conductors were whistling some grand old gospel songs as they went about their work. Business women and girls by the

hundreds were having their own special meetings, while seats were reserved for them at the tabernacle; business men, too, were meeting at the noon-hour for prayer. Profanity had ceased in some workshops, and large corporations were demanding sober men in their firms. All this appealed as something new to Vera who had never before seen practical Christianity brought into every-day life.

She was not present on a particular night when the invitation was extended to the Christians to reconsecrate their lives to the service of Jesus Christ; but as splendid types of the best men, socially and financially, came out for Christ, Vera's conscience began to trouble her, but she decided it would be too humiliating, after all the church work she had done, to come out now and confess that she had never before experienced the saving change in her heart and life.

There was one fact, however, she could not close her eyes to,—namely, that society ladies who were singing in the choir and workers in the audience had neither surrendered as sinners, nor had they consecrated their lives as

God's children, and many times over Vera asked herself the question, "Are they waiting for mother or me?"

There had been a great deal said against card-playing lately and she and her mother had decided that while they would not give up this form of entertainment entirely, they would cease to give prizes. It was a salve for a guilty conscience and only went to prove that a battle was being waged in each breast, but so far no decisive victory had been won.

The dissatisfied feelings Vera attributed to the days and nights she had spent wondering about Alick, and as she saw some splendid girls and young women happy in the love of Jesus and rejoicing in a new-found Savior, she thought if they had the burden of sorrow she was carrying, even salvation could not make them seem happy; so while she sang, worked and planned for the very best, so far as organization was concerned, she was the most miserable person in all that large campaign. She had learned from experience that service was not salvation, that no amount of work could bring peace to a troubled soul and she was long-

ing for a peace the world could not give. She had spent sleepless nights and unhappy days; her mother, becoming alarmed when she noticed that her daughter had lost her appetite, concluded Vera was working too hard and the strain was too great for her nervous system; but Vera knew better. Her trouble was not over-work, nor was she drawing on her reserve nervous energy, but there was a load at her heart that could only be removed by the entrance of Jesus Christ. She had learned that redemption alone could lift the burden, cleanse her soul, bring peace to her troubled breast and secure her for the heavenly home; but that was the point, she was unwilling to yield,—she could not, would not take the place of a sinner, and, as such, accept Christ as her Savior, therefore, she was among the many who were saying, "Not now, some more convenient day on Thee I'll call." The Holy Spirit was grieved as He left her once more, a Christ-rejecter, while she barred her proud heart against the best Friend who had ever sought a place in her affections and in her life.

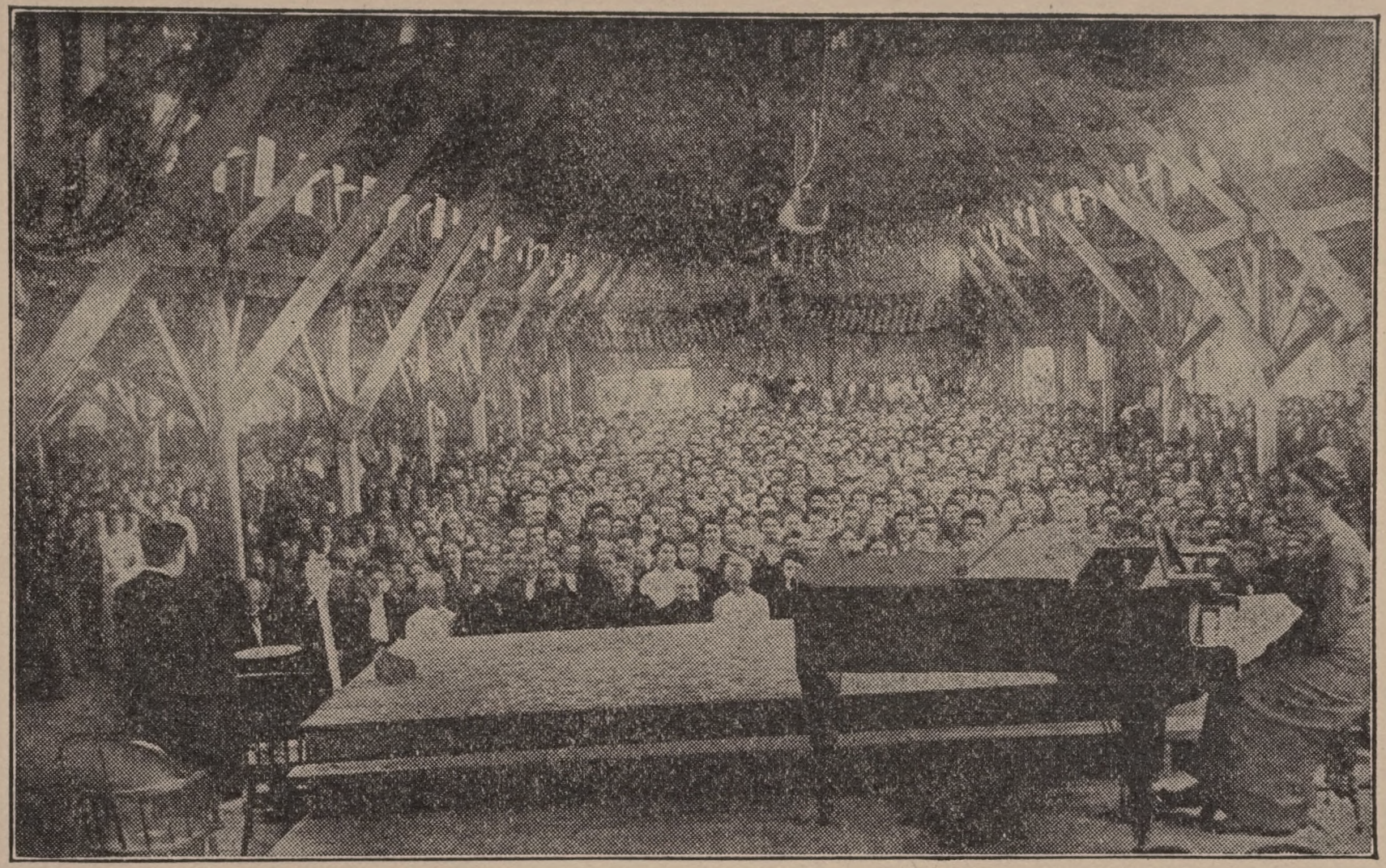
CHAPTER X

Popular Amusements

A SPECIAL night had come in the campaign when the evangelist spoke on the subject of "Popular Amusements." People had crowded into the tabernacle to hear the arguments of this well-informed lecturer on a subject that touched the very heart of the community.

Vera was in her place on the choir loft, feeling very nervous and excited, wondering if the evangelist would bring forth any real strong arguments against card-playing, and if the force of such arguments would humiliate her in the presence of her set of friends, who, actuated by motives of curiosity, were all present.

Her mother had purposely absented herself from that service to show her disapproval of the lecture, but Vera, always fair-minded, had bravely faced the question, and as Alick's downfall was continually in her mind, won-



"The tabernacle was crowded with a most auspicious gathering"

dered if she could possibly be convinced that card-playing was wrong.

At the close of the lecture many crowded down to the front to take a stand against all amusements that were hurting others and leading so many young people to a lost eternity, but Vera stood her ground, unwilling to yield on any point. Her class of boys was present and watching their teacher they decided to follow her example, and let these fanatics go with their narrow-minded views on the amusement question, so smiling broadly at Vera they nodded their willingness to stand by her in not being influenced by any arguments against the things they had been practising every week since she became their much-admired teacher.

At last the meeting was to be closed; the evangelist had raised his hands for all heads to be bowed while he pronounced the benediction, when, suddenly, a man, in appearance like a tramp, walked up the aisle, crushed through the crowd, and took the evangelist by the hand. All eyes were turned toward the strange-looking person, all talking ceased as every ear was strained to hear the testimony

of this unexpected penitent, when his voice rang out clear and distinct:

"I used to attend a church in this city when I was a little boy. My father was an officer in that church. There were seven of us boys in our Sunday-school teacher's class, and we were much loved and respected by her. She used to take us home on Saturday afternoon, and we used to have music and refreshments, and then we would look over our lesson for the following day. After a bit, in order to keep hold of us, she introduced us to cards. She showed us a number of tricks, etc. We soon asked her to give us a little less of the lesson and more of the cards, and to show us more tricks. Shortly after that we ceased to go to her home at all, and took our cards and cigarettes to other places. Then we soon took to gambling and, of course, left the Sunday-school and her evening class altogether.

"I want to tell you what became of those boys. Two of those seven have been hanged; three others are in the state prison for life; the sixth one, if the police knew where he is, would be there, too, and if they knew I were here, I

should be behind the prison bars in double quick time. All I have to say is, I wish that my Sunday-school teacher had not led us as she did,—had never taught us boys to play cards."

The man, with his wild, wayward look had no sooner finished his story, than a woman, dressed in black, staggered forward and fell at his feet, and loudly exclaimed, in a woeful tone, "My God! I am that Sunday-school teacher!"

A physician and nurse were summoned from the audience and succeeded in resuscitating the prostrated teacher, who was carried to the rest room. Dr. Douglass was then called as it was discovered she needed spiritual help more than medical attention.

The man of God found her suffering agony because of her sin. He explained that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1), and told her if she would accept God's terms, she could have forgiveness according to His promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

of the living God, and what He has said is true. The same thing you sow you will reap, but in larger measure. This woman sowed cards and she has reaped gamblers. Sow a lifetime of sin and you will reap an eternity of woe."

"But now, my friend," he continued, as he addressed the strange penitent, "while we know your story is true, we also know that you are responsible to God for your never-dying soul. Your soul, stained with sin, is precious in the sight of God, and His promise is 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). Are you willing to come tonight, just as you are, with all your sin, and put God to the test?"

"If it is possible for God to save such as I, I will trust Him now," said the man, as he grasped at the hope held out in the text.

"Praise God," said the evangelist, "with Him 'there is nothing impossible'" (Luke 1:37).

Then like the publican of old the anxious inquirer smote himself on the breast and cried with deep earnestness "God be merciful to me

a sinner" (Luke 18:13), and God heard and answered prayer.

The meeting was broken up. It was a fitting climax to a number of powerful arguments against the use of cards. Many left the building thankful they had decided to give up that particular form of amusement that was ruining men and women, as they had seen illustrated when they listened to the story of the tramp. Others, Vera among the number, went home to fight the battle on their knees in the quietness of their own rooms, where decisions were made that were going to change the life of the community in the days and years to come.

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CHAPTER XI

A Momentous Hour

VERA seemed very quiet the next day and talked little about the service of the night before. Her mother was entertaining and they saw little of each other, but as the time drew near for the service in the tabernacle it was evident from the preparations that Vera was going again to hear the evangelist preach, and from the sorrowful look in her eyes and the resolute curve of her lips, it was also evident that some important matter had been, or was about to be, settled.

Again she was in her place in the choir. She imagined she received special attention from the evangelist, and that other members of the party were looking at her from time to time, not in a critical way, but as though they were looking for an answer to the many prayers that had been offered in the home of Judge Gordon.

During the sermon, which was a strong appeal to the heart and conscience of the un-

saved, she sat with pale face and set lips. It is true that "God's word is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4: 12), for every word did its work as the Great Physician probed to the core of sin in her heart and made her more miserable than ever if that were possible. She did not pass the message on to others but applied it as a plumb-line to her own heart, saying ever and anon, "That is true, that message is meant for me," as if there were not another person in the tabernacle. "O God, can I be saved?" At last the invitation was given; the choir sang very softly,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

The convicted girl joined in the singing, every moment making her feel the force of the lie upon her lips. No one moved as the evangelist pleaded for sinners to surrender themselves unto God. The struggle in Vera's heart was indescribable. The choir was singing again; she looked at her book and read the

words as the softened voices interpreted them to the anxious souls in the meeting.

"Just as I am, Thy love unknown,
Hath broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

There was a move in the choir and in that momentous hour, Vera Dickson, who never lost her poise, made her way off the platform to the front and reaching her hand to the evangelist said, "I have settled the great question."

Just at that moment a very officious woman walked up and, addressing Vera, said, "I am so glad you are going to reconsecrate your life, Miss Dickson."

"No," said Vera, still addressing the evangelist, "I have come as a sinner, who never experienced the saving change in my life to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and confess Him before the world as my Lord. With God's help I intend putting everything out of my life that is unlike Christ. The confession of the tramp opened my eyes to my influence and teaching on the boys of my Sunday-school class, and from henceforth I shall

give them the plain, simple, old-fashioned gospel, instead of wasting my time entertaining them as I have done in the past."

Oh, the effect was electrical and tremendous! The audience was moved and from every part of the choir and audience Vera's friends made their way down to take a similar stand for Jesus Christ. Her class of boys all came except one, and he was afraid of the opposition in his home if he followed the example of his teacher. The society ladies who had so often laughed at evangelism were now weeping over the years of sinning wasted. Never had there been such a sight as one after another yielded themselves without reserve unto God. The tabernacle rang with the praises of the Lord, while there was "joy in the presence of the angels of God" over still other souls repenting and turning to Him.

Early next morning, long before her people made their appearance, Vera was out, and with her favorite dog gamboling by her side she made her way to "Elmhurst." The air was crisp and fresh and everything was so peaceful; the sky never looked more beautiful as

she gazed at the blue canopy of heaven and realized she had the smile of her heavenly Father. It seemed the trees, too, were clapping their hands, to the music in her soul. What music? Nothing more or less than the sweet melody set to the words which were the language of the new born soul,

"Heaven above is brighter blue,
Earth around is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eye hath never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauty shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am Christ's and Christ is mine."

Miss Arnold who had witnessed the scene the night before was ready to welcome Vera, and throwing her arms around her neck, she showered her with kisses.

"Am I too early to see Mrs. Gordon?" said Vera, just remembering the unearthly hour she had come to call. "I do want to talk with her and would like to see her alone."

"Take a seat, and I shall arrange it for you; don't worry about time; you can have all the time you want." So saying, Miss Arnold dis-

appeared, returning in a few minutes with Mrs. Gordon, who, in her motherly fashion, took the girl in her arms, and looking into her eyes which were filled with tears, said again and again, "Thank God!"

"Mrs. Gordon," said Vera, when she had regained her self-possession, "Sit down, while I tell you what is on my heart, and will kill me unless I can unburden it to you."

Placing the dear girl in an easy chair, she drew another up to her side and Mrs. Gordon said, "Tell it all, Vera, dear. Don't keep anything back."

"I do not know how you will ever forgive me," Vera began, "but I have had an awful fight ever since Alick went away. I know all about what he did,—and oh dear. I feel so guilty for I encouraged him to play cards! When he argued against the use of them with my Sunday-school boys I told him there was no harm in the game; when he asked if I would marry a man who had become a gambler, I boastingly said, 'No,' and now,—Alick is gone. I did my part in making him a gambler, yet I was a church member and a Sunday-school

teacher. The fight has been going on throughout this entire campaign, and my decision last night was only the outcome of the climax brought to my misery when that tramp came forward. Had I not done exactly the same thing that teacher had done? I had helped to send Alick, a gambler, away from home and mother. I kept my class of boys from deciding for Jesus Christ. God has forgiven me, and I am saved today, 'redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.' Now, dear Mrs. Gordon," and Vera was very wistful as she spoke, "can you forgive me?"

Mrs. Gordon's great mother-heart had been going out to the girl as she realized what it meant for her to make such a confession, and with a ring of assurance in her voice, she said:

"Yes, my dear, I frankly forgive you. I knew you could not have lived differently, as you had not experienced a change of heart, and all Alick needs, too, is the same change. You and I shall pray him into the kingdom, shall we not, Vera?" Together they knelt, thanking God for one soul redeemed; asking

Him for the one who was still far from God and grace, and believing that He could reach him and bring the conviction necessary to make Alick take the same stand Vera had taken for her Lord and Master, and claim the promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them" (Matt. 18: 19).

"Now, dear," said Mrs. Gordon as she kissed her goodbye, "the next thing to do is to believe the promises and cling to God for an answer to our prayers. We must pray through and God will honor our faith; He has done it in the past and, "He is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13: 8).

"You have so much faith, Mrs. Gordon. I wonder if I will ever grow to be such a strong Christian as you."

"Yes, you will and perhaps a great deal stronger, for God's Word makes it clear that He can do great things for those who put their trust in Him. You remember the portion, 'He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His

eye' (Deut. 32: 10). What a wonderful God we have! Trust Him every day even when you cannot trace Him, and all will be well."

CHAPTER XII

On the Bounding Ocean

THE ship's doctor sat at the same table with Alick Gordon and as he took his place at breakfast one morning, he announced the death of a young man who had passed away the night before.

"What was the cause of death?" inquired Alick.

"Pneumonia," said the doctor. "He has had a sad history, poor fellow, and being somewhat of a humanitarian I encouraged him to tell me the truth about his past. It seems he came from a struggling though respectable family, learned to play cards like many boys when he was quite young, and soon acquired the art of gambling. This caused him to drift from home. The rest of his story is but a repetition of many who have gone the same way. He went from bad to worse until he found himself without friends in a strange land and ill in body. His mother, a good woman I under-

stand, sent enough money to take him home where she might nurse him back to health. He caught cold, developed pneumonia, and being in a run-down condition was quite unable to battle with the disease. We did everything in our power to save him, but all in vain. We will bury him tomorrow morning. Would you like to see the funeral? It will take place at seven o'clock from the lower deck aft."

"I shall be there. I have never seen a funeral at sea and I am anxious to know just how it is conducted," said Alick in an interested manner.

At an early hour Alick was on deck and had tried to get accustomed to the rolling of the ship before the time fixed for the funeral. He was a good sailor and was not afraid to appear on deck in a storm, and if ever a storm raged it seemed to outdo itself in ferocity that morning. The wind howled, the sea roared and threw its spray up in torrents, sweeping the deck every time as though it were clamoring for the body that was soon to be lowered into its depths. When its purpose was not gained, it staggered like a drunken man, throwing the great ship

about like a straw, first to one side until it seemed she would never recover her poise. Then foiled in its effort it would throw her to the other side, and again anxious to get the mastery, it would send her dipping forward and reeling backward with creaks and groans enough to make passengers decide to remain in their staterooms, if not compelled to do so, and the person who ventured up, found it difficult to keep his feet unless he had his sea legs.

Promptly at seven o'clock the procession came. First, came the captain accompanied by a minister who was a passenger and who had been asked to conduct the service. Then followed the sailors carrying the stretcher on which was placed the canvas casket containing the remains of the poor fellow who had passed away with not a friend to smooth his pillow as death came to claim its victim. The nation's flag was draped around the stretcher and casket. A number of officers and men followed. They came to a certain place on the deck that apparently had been cleared for the occasion and Alick watched closely. The early hour, the absence of curiosity-seekers, the re-

spect for the dead, the reverence with which these men doffed their hats as the stretcher rested on the bulwark, all seemed to speak to Alick of a great beyond to which every human being must go; for a moment he was lost in thought. Where is the poor fellow now? These people were kind, no doubt, while he lived and they are respectful now that he is dead. I wonder if anyone ever thought of pointing him to Christ? The minister was reading—Alick knew by the movement of his lips, though no one heard a sound. No human voice could be heard above the voice of the storm as it poured forth its sad wail, set in a minor key. It was a wail that drove many a mariner to pray as he had never prayed before, and gave many anxious thoughts to the wife who lay awake thinking of her husband who might never drop anchor again and say triumphantly, as he sprang on the pier, "Home." The closed eyes and folded hands of the minister told the onlookers he was praying. Then at a given signal the sailors tilted the stretcher and the body in its canvas casket dropped from under the flag into the raging torrent beneath. No friend

was near to heave a sigh, no loved one to shed a tear. There was something sad about it all, and Alick turned away from the scene with home and mother occupying his thoughts as they had not done for some time. As he reviewed the past which might have been parallel with that of the young man whose funeral service he had just attended, and who had now entered upon eternity, the language of his heart was, "There goes Alick Gordon but for a merciful God."

Alick had turned over a new leaf, but was very much troubled over the past, which insisted on coming up before his vision, reminding him that—

"Resolutions will not suffice,
'Tis life poor sinners need."

No one knew his need better than he did himself, for he had learned the necessity of the new birth from childhood from the best teacher a boy can have—a godly mother.

Judge Gordon had found a position for his son with an old-time friend, who was going abroad with a party of well-to-do business men

in the interests of a new enterprise. Alick was their legal adviser on the trip, and had done his work so satisfactorily that they had offered him, subsequent on his return, if he cared to consider it, a permanent position, a good salary, and the chance of being introduced in a new and growing city with the prospect of building up a good practice for himself.

CHAPTER XIII

A Good Confession

ON Vera's return home she found her father alone in the library and, slipping over to his side, said, "Father, I want to talk to you."

"What troubles my little daughter?" said the kind-hearted man who loved Vera dearly.

"Nothing troubles me," said Vera, her face illumined with such light and gladness that her father watched it, entranced. "I am the happiest girl in all the world today. Last night I accepted Christ as my Savior and confessed Him as my Lord."

"You don't mean to say you came out in the meeting?"

"Yes, father, I did."

"But you have always been a good girl, Vera, and I cannot see why you needed a change; you never did anything wrong."

"No, I never did anything that I knew was wrong, but I did something that was wrong

in the sight of God. Mother and you did not seem to think there was any harm in it and that made the fight all the more bitter for me, but I settled it all with God, last night, and I feel so happy today."

"Will you tell me just what you mean by that statement?" and Vera with incisive tones gave a full explanation.

"I have always played cards and we have given prizes at our parties and I have won prizes at other card parties. I have entertained my Sunday-school boys here once a week ever since I came from college and when Alick Gordon came for my advice I upheld card-playing as a perfectly legitimate way of entertaining. He was pleased that I went against, what he called, the narrow-minded views of his mother. You remember poor Alick became a gambler, and used up the money entrusted to his father for investment, and left home, while his father and mother have been working so hard ever since to pay his debts. Well, father, I could have nipped that sin in the bud if I had only known that a form of amusement that would end in disaster for one person, was

not right for a Sunday-school teacher. The trouble, however, was, I was a church member and a Sunday-school teacher professionally, without ever having experienced a change of heart. The Lord opened my eyes during this campaign to see myself as a sinner in the sight of God, needing nothing more or less than the new birth, and only last night did that saving change take place in my heart."

Her father paid splendid attention to all the beautiful girl had said, and seeing the kindly interest in his face Vera ventured to say,

"May I ask a question, father?"

"Certainly, dear."

"Are you saved?"

"I think not, Vera."

"You would make such a fine Christian, father."

"I have been thinking very seriously about this matter since these meetings started, and I assure you if mother would take the step you have taken I would go with her and publicly confess Jesus Christ before the world."

This added to Vera's happiness immensely, and she went out to look for her mother, feel-

ing sure that all she had to do was to tell her as she had told her father and she, too, would surrender to the claims of Christ; and their home would become a very Bethany on earth where Jesus loved to come to dwell.

Vera was doomed to disappointment when she met her mother, and the Lord seemed to have been preparing her for the trial that lay before her, by giving her so many things to encourage her during the hours that had passed since she became a child of God.

She was in the drawing-room when her mother entered, looking very much excited and apparently worked up about something, and Vera wondered if it were an opportune time to tell her about her new-found joy and happiness. She did not need to wonder long, for rage was written on every feature of Mrs. Dickson's face as she paced the floor, and the twitching of her mouth was a prelude to the battle that was about to be fought.

"Vera," she said, with a voice stern and peremptory, stopping in front of the girl, "whatever has happened to you? I have heard of the scene you made in the tabernacle last night and

the stand you took against cards, and you know very well where I stand on that question. It was bad enough for the minister and the evangelist to be extreme along some lines, but for my own daughter to go so far against her mother as to take a stand like that, right in our city, and among my set of friends, is too much. These things are for the plebean and are despicable enough in them, but what are we coming to in society when the daughter of L. W. Dickson joins the fanatics, and leads a procession of society women down to the front in a revival meeting, and then have them come here to convert me to their views, as though I were the greatest sinner in town! What have you to say for yourself?"

Vera felt her insufficiency to answer her mother's arguments, but with a prayer for help she ventured to say, "Only this, mother,—that I never knew I was a sinner until these meetings started."

"What dreadful thing have you done that you should have to take the place of a sinner like that?"

"It isn't that mother; God's Word says that 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3: 23), and that included me; it is not the amount of my sin, but the fact that I came into the world a sinner, and nothing could ever take me to heaven but the new birth."

"I understand that the principal thing you have given up is cards, and if others have gone too far with card-playing, I fail to see how that could affect you."

"That is just what I learned mother, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way' (Isa. 53: 6), and that is the way I had chosen,—a way that was leading me farther and farther from God, so I just came as I was, a poor lost sheep to the fold last night, and oh mother, dear, I am so happy! I want to see father and you take the same step soon."

"If you made a fool of yourself you need not expect that we are going to follow your example. I do not believe in public demonstrations of religion and will never go forward in that tabernacle to make a confession of my

faith in God, so you may make up your mind now that you have to stand alone." With this she swept out of the room and, as if by tacit agreement, the subject was not again resumed. The first blow to Vera's new-found faith and joy had come, and she went to her room to quietly weep over her sorrow and talk it over with the Friend "that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18: 24), for does not God's Word say, "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15), and exhorts us to "Cast your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5: 7)? She had a blessed time as she turned to John 9 and read that when the man who had been blind from birth, received his sight and was cast out by the Jews, he was befriended by the Son of God. Dropping on her knees she cried to the God whom she had only learned to trust and asked Him for His friendship at this time when she had incurred the anger of her mother for Christ's sake. A sweet, settled peace filled her soul as she realized for the first time the truth—"Unto them who believe He is precious" (1 Peter 2: 7).

CHAPTER XIV

Answered Prayer

VERA had gone out early to meet some college girls and have a lunch with them before going to the tabernacle. She had stopped asking her mother to attend the services, but was praying that she might have the joy of seeing her father and mother on the side of Jesus Christ. Mrs. Dickson seemed to be laboring under conviction ever since she had learned of her daughter's stand for her Lord and Master. It was, therefore, beyond Vera's most sanguine expectations when she saw her father and mother enter the building and take their seats on the platform. She prayed most earnestly that the Lord would open her mother's eyes and bring her to a saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

The sermon was a powerful one, the evangelist basing his remarks on the text, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24: 15). As the old gospel story rang out once

more in all its fullness and simplicity, Vera prayed never so fervently, that her home might become like Joshua's when he made the choice "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Oh, the joy that came to her when the invitation was given and her father and mother, the society leaders of the city, came down from the rostrum and stood beside the evangelist to confess that they had made Joshua's choice, and were going henceforth to serve the Lord, not as professors, but as possessors of the eternal life that God alone can give!

Vera, who was doing personal work in the audience, heard the good news, and made her way to the front. Her mother told her in the most amicable terms how great the struggle had been, and how, at last, it had ended at the Cross so that now she could sing:

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause,
Maintain the honor of His word,
The glory of His cross.

"At the cross, at the cross,
Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day."

There was joy in the presence of the angels that night, and Vera wondered if their joy could be greater than the rejoicing of her heart as she made her way home with her father and mother, all saved and anxious to live for God in such a way that he would be well pleased.

"Father," said the happy girl, as they entered their home, "shall we have family worship tonight before retiring?"

"Certainly, dear," said her father, who was now on fire for the God who had been kept out of his life for so many years.

Together they read a portion of Scripture and knelt in prayer, pouring out the gratitude of their hearts to the One "who hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Psalm 126: 3).

Mrs. Dickson's tears flowed freely as she sobbed out her sorrow for the way she had rejected the Son of God, and in making her surrender the language of her very soul was,

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Shall have my soul, my life, my all."

"Vera," she said, as she followed the girl to her room, "I have lived so much for self in the past, and I know so little of God, that I need your help now in starting to live anew. 'Old things have passed away and all things have become new' (2 Cor. 5: 17). We will require a regular house-cleaning campaign and my desire is, that when we are through there will not be a sign of the old life left in our home to remind us of the time we have wasted—precious time—that could have been spent for God had we only known Him, but since we cannot undo the past I want to redeem the time, and crowd as much service as possible into the remaining days and years. You will help me, Vera, dear, won't you?"

"Yes, mother, I will do anything I can, but I feel so weak, I fear I will need more help than you."

CHAPTER XV

Miss Beatrice Dixon

IT was Sunday evening, and in a very nicely furnished room in an apartment house in a city many miles away, was a young man lying in a recumbent position, suffering with an acute attack of nostalgia. He leaned over to the table and drew towards him a copy of the Saturday evening paper and scanned the columns of church notices, wondering where he could go to pass the time and help him to forget the past. His eye caught a strange notice,—the name of a church was given with the name of the pastor who was to preach in the morning, and then came the words that attracted Alick Gordon, for it was he who was so lonely and homesick,—"7:30 P. M. Miss Beatrice Dixon will lecture. Everybody invited."

That name brought back memories of other days and thoughts of the companionship of one whose image was ever present with him, whom from childhood he had loved, and whom neither

time nor distance could efface from his memory.

Courteous, kindhearted, generous almost to a fault, Alick had made friends wherever he went, and here, many had tried to lead him into their clubs and societies, but the thought of the past kept him from the thing that to him was "the very appearance of evil."

Men, too, with fastidious wives and elegant daughters were unremitting in their attention to the homeless young man who had come amongst them, but while he accepted their attentions with much complacency, he seemed rather restless and uneasy at times. Again and again he was taken to task for his moodiness and absence of mind, but they were quite unsuccessful in eliciting from him a satisfactory explanation, so concluded he was either a confirmed bachelor or had left behind him a wife and family, clouded by a mystery they were unable to solve.

It was, however, all too real to Alick, so trying to throw off the homesick feelings he decided to visit this particular church and hear the lecture, so donning his hat and coat he left

his lonely room and boarded a street-car for the part of the city where the lady was to lecture.

The church was small but cozy and comfortable. Few were there when he arrived, but several men, who had come out of curiosity, to hear the lecture also, came off the same car and entered with Alick. They seemed jolly and were very talkative, and suggested that they go near the front, for said one, "A woman's voice is so weak we may not hear if we stay in the rear."

When they were seated on the left side of the church they discussed the service.

"Who is Miss Beatrice Dixon?" asked one of the men.

"Never heard of her," said another.

"What is she going to lecture about?"

"Expect suffrage."

"Maybe temperance."

Just then the vestry door opened and the minister entered, followed by a young woman who took her place beside the minister on the platform with perfect self-composure.

Alick watched every move and for the time forgot why he was there and what had brought him to that church. The service began; the hymns were old-fashioned and familiar for Alick had sung them many times before in Sunday-school. Then came the sermon; the lady stood up with Bible in hand, and announced her subject. All doubt as to the nature of her lecture was banished from the minds of her hearers, as she told out the old, old story in a way that was new to many in the audience, but not to Alick Gordon, for the truths in that story were only a repetition of what he had listened to from babyhood from his own mother's lips, and he found himself going back in thought to the time when he knelt at her knee and repeated with baby lips,

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity,
Help me now to come to Thee."

Then again he could hear his mother explain portions of Scripture and emphasize the need in every life for a Savior who could "save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him"

(Heb. 7:25), and again he could hear her voice lifted in prayer as she knelt beside him at his little bed and her words seemed to echo from the past as she petitioned the throne of grace for the salvation of her boy.

Miss Dixon talked as though she had experienced the salvation she recommended to others. Her text was John 3:7: "Ye must be born again." She spoke about the absolute necessity of the new birth and showed that as children of Adam we belonged to a fallen race and never could have a place in the glory-land without the new birth; then she pointed out God's wonderful love in giving a Savior to redeem us from the hand of the enemy. She spoke of the simplicity of God's way of salvation that by simply taking the place of sinners and accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior we were born into the family of God, and what a great change took place when we were born again, that "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17), that the things we loved before we hate now, the things we hated before we

love now and that only Jesus Christ in our hearts and lives could make such a change.

She spoke of the assurance that came to us from the Word of God which makes it so clear that "we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2: 13), and are now "children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8: 16, 17).

Then she applied the message and told her audience that the Christ whom Nicodemus had visited during the midnight hours was present, as willing and ready to save now as on that memorable night when He said to the anxious inquirer, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3: 14, 15); then the invitation was extended to all who had not already surrendered to the claims of Christ to do it now.

There was an awful struggle in Alick Gordon's soul; the devil was unwilling to let him go, and he piled up the barriers mountains high so that Alick felt it would be an easy matter

for others to surrender, but he was such a sinner it would be impossible for him to be saved.

His mother's prayers and tender pleadings recurred to him, as they had done frequently of late, and with a heart-breaking because of sin, he bravely, manfully and courageously left his seat and stepped out before the entire audience and confessed his need of Jesus Christ.

The battle was terrific and the devil fought hard to keep one who had been a faithful servant of his for so many years, but God, who is ever Almighty, revealed His way of salvation and made it so simple that on bended knees in that far-away church building, confessing his sins to God, Alick Gordon entered in by the door Christ Jesus (John 10: 9), and was saved from sin.

He now returned to his room to hold sweet communion with the One who had so freely pardoned his sins, and looking in his trunk for the little Bible that had been the gift of his mother many years before, he sat into the morning hours searching the Scriptures to see if these things were so, and only when day-

light began to stream through the closed shutters did he realize he had not slept. Instead of retiring to rest he decided to stroll out to the woods where he could commune with the God whom he had rejected through the years; sitting down on a tree that had been blown down by the winter's storms he reviewed the past and with thankful heart praised God for taking care of him and saving him, even in his Christless career, from drifting into a life of profligacy. As he looked back with new vision he could see that it was not his will-power that had kept him from drifting but an answer to his godly mother's prayers, and the care of a Creator for His rebellious creature, in preserving him,—in the midst of snares,—from falling deeper into sin. Alick Gordon had been held up as an example of clean manhood by many a mother as she tried to save her boy in that distant city, not knowing that there had been a time in his life when he took the cup his mother had begged him never to touch, and had played the game that drove him from home and nearly broke his mother's heart. Now the prodigal who so re-

cently had his eyes opened to see himself as he was in the sight of God, decided to return to his mother and give her cause for joy, "for this her son was dead, and is alive again; was lost and is found" (Luke 15: 32).

CHAPTER XVI

The Prodigal's Return

MRS. Gordon and Miss Arnold had been making Alick a special subject of prayer, and many times each day those hearts were lifted to God in intercessory prayer for the prodigal boy in the far country.

One morning, when they had finished their worship, Mrs. Gordon said, "Jessie, I feel that prayer has been answered and God has found my poor erring boy; I believe that the Shepherd who has been out on the mountains cold and bare has at last found the sheep that was lost. That promise, 'If two of you agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done' (Matt. 18: 19), has been such a blessing to me during the last few days that I am confident our prayers have been answered, and that those words should be written in capitals in every Bible, 'IT SHALL BE DONE.' We do not need to wait until we hear from Alick; I think we ought to have a praise meeting right now," and together they sang,

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Neither of them noticed the door open and some one enter, but when they had finished the stanza they looked up and there stood Alick by the side of his mother.

"Amen; mother, you surely have something to praise God for! Here is your son returned to you a new creature in Christ Jesus,—saved by Sovereign grace. I thought I would not write, nor wire, but just come."

For a few moments Miss Arnold felt like "taking the shoes from off her feet" for, she realized, "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. 3: 5), and like the morning when mother and son had stood in that very room when Alick's sin had found him out, again she felt it was no place for intruders, and she quietly left the room and telephoned Vera.

Vera answered the telephone herself with a "Good morning, Miss Arnold."

"Good morning, Miss Vera; what are you going to do this evening?"

"Nothing special except study my Sunday-school lesson."

"Would you like a caller?"

"I will be delighted to have you call; come early."

"You may expect a visitor then about 7 o'clock."

* * * * * * *

Vera was alone trying to study her Sunday-school lesson. Strange that her mind should be so much on Alick this evening, and again and again her heart would go up in prayer for the one whom she had helped to send away in disgrace. Oh how she wished she could take back those arguments and bring Alick Gordon to God!

"A gentleman to see you, Miss Dickson," announced the butler.

"Who is it, Harrison?"

"He won't give his name, Miss Dickson."

"Show him in, Harrison."

The door opened, and who should appear but Alick Gordon!

Vera could not hide her emotions. The pent-up feelings gave way and as Alick took her outstretched hand she leaned against his

breast in a paroxysm of grief mingled with joy, sobbing out her thanks to God for an opportunity of seeing once more the one whom she felt she had sinned against.

"Vera," said Alick who was able to control himself better than the excited girl, "mother has told me all about your conversion to God, and little girl, I have come to both mother and you, to tell you, that I, too, have been snatched as a brand from the burning, and now I am rejoicing in a new-found Savior."

When Vera regained her self-possession she said, "Alick, I think I will never be able to praise God enough for this another answer to prayer. He was so good in showing me the error of my way, and now I feel like Rhoda when Peter was released from prison, I can scarcely believe it is true that you are really here, and better than everything else you are saved."

That night before they parted they had plighted their troth on their knees before God, leaving their future in His hands, with one desire permeating each breast, namely, "The glory of God."

CHAPTER XVII

Saved to Serve

THERE was much to be done now that such a large campaign had come to an end, and the pastors found their hands full. Dr. Archibald Douglass was a frequent and welcome visitor at the Dickson residence and no one entered into the work so heartily as Vera Dickson.

"Whatever would I do without her," was the expression of Dr. Douglass many times as he faced difficult problems and appealed to Vera for assistance, and now that Alick Gordon had returned and was proving himself such a fine type of Christian manhood, he could count on a splendid team of young people, whom not only he, but the Lord could trust with special work in that particular part of His vineyard.

"What strong characters they are," was the remark that could be heard over and over again. "They were at one time out-and-out worldlings;

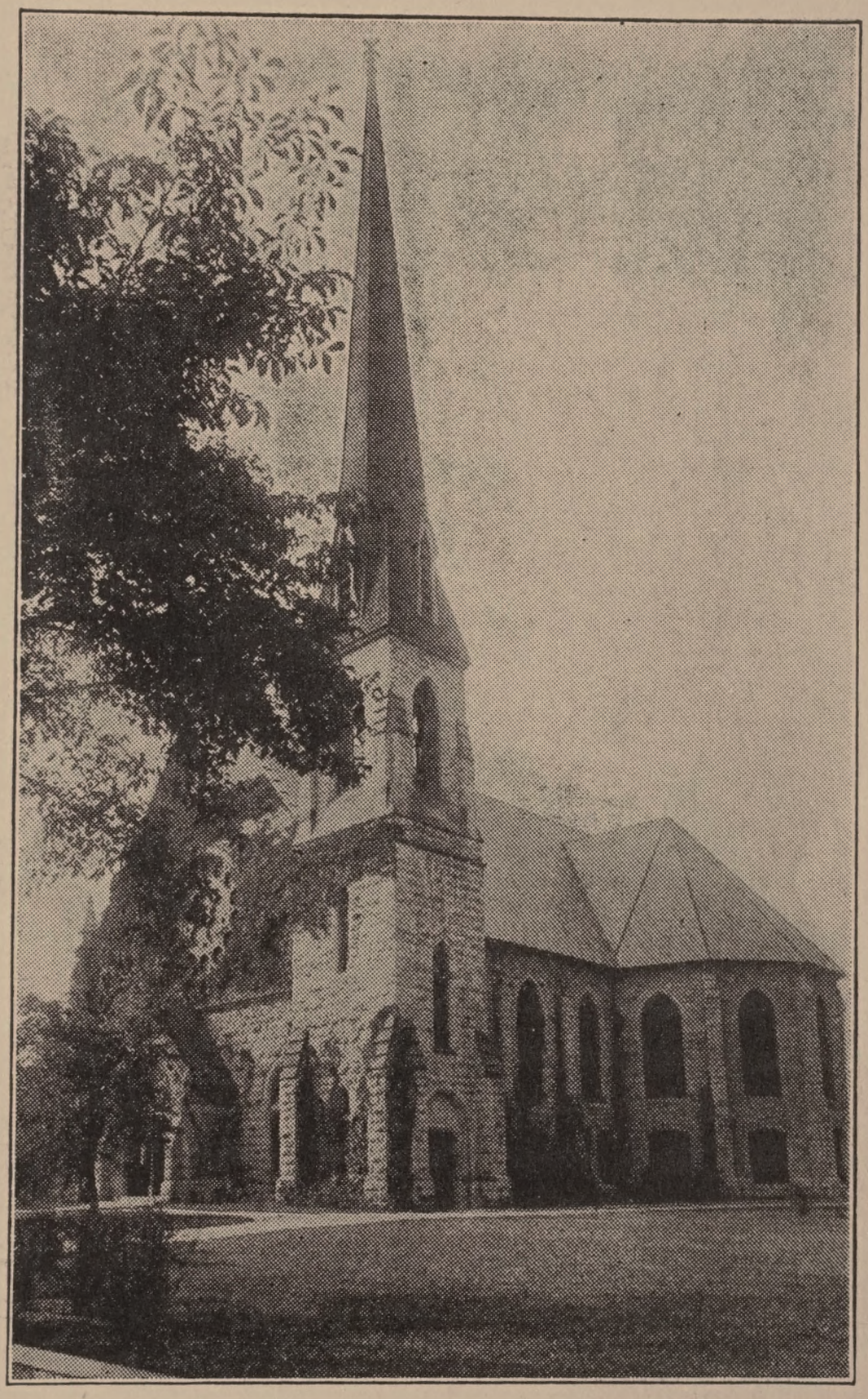
now they are out-and-out in the service of God."

They were growing in grace daily and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and were both becoming fine students of the Word of God, eager to work, but also anxious to learn the will of the One "who hath done great things for us whereof we are glad" (Psalm 126: 3).

Vera's class had grown until she felt it was almost more than she could manage alone; and what a band of splendid young men! none of them twenty years of age, but nearly all saved and consecrated to the service of the Lord.

Alick had become a member of the men's Bible class and was one of its finest workers in the spread of the gospel and in bringing men to the Savior of sinners.

Vera, however, was in trouble about her class, for she loved every boy in her charge dearly and had their very best interests at heart, but the work among the young women of the city was claiming her attention at this time. She had just awakened to the great need for leaders in such work, who not only had a personal knowledge of salvation, but who also had



The Church Home of the Dicksons and the Gordons

an intimate knowledge of human nature, and of young women in particular. She took the matter to the Lord in prayer, asking for special leading as to what she should do, anxious that the time and strength she was giving to the service of the Master should be spent to the very best advantage for Him, and relying on His promise, "Acknowledge Him in all thy ways, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6). Vera waited for the direct leading of the Lord in this matter with a will that was fully yielded to the Lord, and the language of her heart was like that of Frances Ridley Havergal, who wrote,

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

"Take my voice, and let me sing
Always only for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

"Take my will and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

"Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee."

"Alick," said Vera, on one occasion when he had come to spend the evening at her home, "I have a proposition to make."

"What now, Vera? You are always making propositions."

"It is just this, Alick. You know my class of boys. From my observation of the work in the city, I think young men's classes should have a strong man for their teacher,—one who can set up a high standard of Christian living; they need ideals, and I have prayed about the matter, and feel confident you are the one to take over my class; the boys all love you and they will not mind the change."

"But what will you do, Vera? You will die without your boys."

"That might have been true some time ago, Alick, but since my will is no longer mine I am satisfied with the substitute the Lord has given me for them. Then, too, I will be free to take up the much needed work among the young

women of the city where we have not been able to place a competent leader and from henceforth my time will be devoted to that service."

"But, Vera, I am not a teacher; I am really only learning the A B C of the gospel myself, and I fear I could never teach those boys."

"That is just where I am, Alick; I have not even had the advantages you had in your home, and neither of us have studied the Bible as a text-book, but I have talked this matter over with Dr. Douglass, and he recommends very highly a Bible * which he says is both Bible and teacher combined."

* * * * * * *

The plans were completed for the wedding which was to take place at "The Elms." It had been the request of Vera that they have a quiet home wedding, with no guests except the nearest friends of both bride and groom,—with one exception—Alick's class of young men and her classes of young women—these young people were to be her special guests. She had arranged for a speaker who would bring a mes-

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*A descriptive circular and price-list—also the Bible itself—may be obtained from the publishers of this book, or from the dealer who supplies it to you.

sage from the Savior who had honored the marriage feast at Cana with His presence.

Never did such a happy company listen to the unfolding of the words of Jesus as assembled at "The Elms" on this particular occasion. It could not be otherwise since the Master Himself was present.

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The ceremony was over and the happy couple were leaving for their honeymoon. The young were present to congratulate them; the old to say, "God bless you"; their friends had showered them with gifts of all kinds; but the gift valued more than anything else was the Bible that each had presented to the other, which was to be their guide while life lasted for they had found it was "A lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their paths" (Psalm 119: 105), and they trusted the Word which told them, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4: 18).

"Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand,
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry, touch the spirit there."

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